DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 370 CG 006 724

AUTHOR Papell, Catherine P.
TITLE Sensitivity Training: Relevance for Social Work Education.
INSTITUTION Adelphi Univ., Garden City, N.Y.
PUB DATE Jan 71
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at Annual Program Meeting of Council on Social Work Education, Seattle, Wash., January 26-28, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Group Dynamics; Group Experience; *Human Relations; Interpersonal Relationship; Learning Experience; Learning Laboratories; *Professional Education; *Sensitivity Training; *Social Work; Social Workers; *Training Laboratories

ABSTRACT

The author explores the validity of sensitivity training for professional social work education with its inherent concern for the relation between experiential and theoretical learning. The various streams in the sensitivity training movement are surveyed and the laboratory concept identified as particularly relevant. A human relations laboratory, offered annually as a supplementary educational opportunity for professional social work students at Adelphi University, is described. A clear definition of goals is stressed, as well as careful planning which includes students. Initial, impressionistic evaluations by students are included. The author concludes that sensitivity training has much to offer for both teaching and practicing social work, and suggests further exploration of the use of the human relations laboratory for social work education. (Author/TL)

ED057370

SENSITIVITY TRAINING: RELEVANCE FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

BY

Catherine P. Papell, MSW
Associate Professor
Adelphi University
School of Social Work

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Paper presented at
Annual Program Meeting Of
Council On Social Work Education
Seattle, Washington
January, 1971

CG 006 724

The author wishes to acknowledge warmly the student members of the planning groups for the Adelphi University School of Social Work Human Relations Laboratories in 1970-1971. Michael Katch, Maxine Lynn and Gil Spielberg brought knowledge, leadership and remarkable judgement in both years to the conception and development of the programs. Linda Ehrenfreund and Matty Levinson in the first year, and Ruth Berlin, Linda Levy, Richard Levy, Ruth Mohr, Rhoda Parnes in the second year were superb in their contributions. All worked with deep commitment to the educational process of their chosen profession. Their influence pervades this paper.

In beginning this hazardous discussion, in order to bouy up my sagging courage, as our psycho-dynamics have taught us that humor will do, I should like to call attention to a small notation on the music page of the New York Times of January 3rd: "David Rosenbloom, an avant-garde composer, has created a work called 'Ecology of the Skin', which he describes as 'an electro-encephalographic experience for performer/leader and group dynamic brain waves.'" If Bach could imbed the religious devotion of his era in his music, Shostokovitch the heroism of his times, then we should indeed expect our young composer of today to deal with the search for closeness in the small group. But we are to discuss here, not the way music expresses the immediacy of life, but how our profession and its educational system is influenced by and relates to the current phenomenon, commonly spoken of as a movement and commonly called sensitivity training.

Perhaps you too have found that you receive mailings at least once a week about workshops, institutes, personal growth experiences, leadership training courses, and new publications about this field of human concern. Announcements and advertisements are found in the local press. Most popular magazines and newspapers have carried major stories about sensitivity training conducted at winter resorts, in large hotel ballrooms, in private apartments, sponsored by business organizations, educational institutions, church and temple programs and private practitioners. Professional contacts in the community inevitably bring reference to and requests for encounter group eperience. Young people enter social work education having had substantial experience in undergraduate life in T-Group programs and bring into the class-

room their understanding of group process and human relations skills. Students request laboratory experience in the curriculum and set it up for themselves if it is not provided by the school. Perhaps more unsettling to our professional classicism are the mini-labs creeping into the field experience in staff development programs and T-Groups in students' actual assignments. Sensitivity training has insisted itself upon us and we must decide upon our professional approach.

Some will dismiss this phenomenon as a fad, wanting to wish it away, and indeed it does have some such qualities. Fadism implies a totality of acceptance, without rational exploration of goals and outcomes, and totality implies panacea, a whole solution. As its limitations are recognized by the public and the professions, and people get on with the hard work of understanding and managing the human condition it too will wane as a fad.

Others may dismiss it as a highly lucrative field for capitalistic adventure. It does seem in character with a money economy wherein we pay for our human services along with our groceries and recreation that this should happen.

Still others will respond with concern for the possibility of psychological trauma. Whereas it is "expected that Institute programs will evoke, recognize and focus on the emotional reactions of participants as this emphasis is relevant to the specified programs goals",[1] reliable research has shown that as few as 1 in 1200 participants has experienced severe psychological disturbance as a result of the inter-personal engagement which has taken place in responsibly developed training

groups.[2] Rogers speaks of a "rumor" phenomenon, perhaps attributable to the anxiety with which non-participants may react to the acute presence of change. Learning of any kind, including interpersonal skills, is an adventure into the unknown.[3]

Still others will avoid it out of deep philosophical concern. In the same issue of the New York Times in the magazine section Bruce I. Maliver, in his disturbing critique, writes: "Many observers feel that there is in the encounter movement the essence of a profound emotional fascism. Not necessarily a political fascism, but one that elicits emotional conformity, demands the correct behavior and the correct emotion at the designated time, and suppresses criticism.[4]

This same philosophical concern is handled somewhat more constructively, but with strong warning by Hollister, writing in the NTL Human Relations Training News. "Training designs, in their enthusiasm for impact, often tremble on the edge of mind conditioning. If the goal of sensitivity training is to help the individual understand, cope with and constructively use group methods we should think twice before utilizing certain training techniques and psychological tools that are used by those who seek to induce plasticity and suggestibility...Perhaps all these patterns of psychological experiences could be used either for manipulative or for freedom-giving purposes. For those of us whose goal it is to strengthen individuality and to avoid inducing conformity and the control of minds, it would seem wise for us to carefully examine our intent and technology each time we use similar tools in our training programs."[5] Such a state-

ment pertaining to value questions underlying practice is familiar in the tradition of our profession.

It is the position of this paper that the profession of social work with its specific mission in relation to social functioning can not dissassociate itself from the sensitivity training movement, and that we must be concerned and constructive in relation to it.

We must be certain that we are taking into account in our planning the bitter reality of the social forces that are creating the popularity of this movement, not just giving lip service with abstractions and suggestions of theories.

We as professional educators struggling with the relation between experiential and theoretical learning must explore what help may be available for us from the laboratory movement in developing new pedagogies that teach for use.

Furthermore, we are certainly no longer the only profession that is concerned with the helping relationship in one-to-one, small group and community processes. It may well be that a generic kind of human relation training in dyadic and small group processes will further our time honored goal of self-awareness as a professional attribute.

In spite of the very limited writing[6] on this subject in our literature, there is evidence of considerable interest among our colleagues who should indeed be expected to make a basic contribution to our journals in the near future in relation to both practice and education.

The wide umbrella of this movement and its popularization includes programs which are highly questionable according to the knowledge and practice base of any of the helping professions. Those programs and practices that seem to clearly violate ethical standards of the helping professions are not the basic consideration of this paper. For example, a recent mailing which came over my desk announces that a California organization which conducts groups for parents, teachers, and administrators is "presently recruiting people - with or without degrees - to conduct their classes and groups. After a brief training period -- instructors can make $15 to $20 per hour." My comments in relation to such an announcement are two: first, social workers should be prepared to contribute to the education of the consumer out of concern for the public welfare so that irresponsible programs are avoided and proper standards are demanded; and second, standards, their development and/or enforcement for such a popularized phenomenon in human interaction experimentation, are the problem of all the helping professions. Social work should include itself in undertaking the task of developing standards either by initiative or collaboration, particularly with psychology, psychiatry, education, social psychology and religion. But we can only do so if we are willing to study the movement with a scholarly and open mind and with respect for its history and accomplishments.

The sensitivity training movement is not monolythic and it is our responsibility to search it out so that we understand its theoretical sources and its practice outcomes, and can respond differentially. It is to this end that this paper

will be directed. I will attempt to partialize the movement, to define terms, to put some perimeters around sections of it that can be useful to our educational and professional function, and to describe directions of a given curriculum in this regard.

Definition of terms: What is sensitivity training?

There are seven primary terms used to distinguish this so-called movement which must be understood in relation to one another: T-Group, laboratory method, human relations training, sensitivity training, personal growth experiences, basic encounter, and intensive group experience. No one term quite subsumes all others in common usage, yet all are used commonly. The selection of term by various authors in the literature seems to indicate something, with varying degrees of definitiveness, about a given approach or emphasis. Probably a kinship to the model of the T-Group in its broadest sense would be acknowledged by all persons identifying themselves in any way with any one of these terms. It would seem to this writer that anyone who does not acknowledge connection with the T-Group method is jumping on the experiential bandwagon without acknowledging the resource of history and theory.[7]

The T-Group had its origin in the summer of 1946 at a workshop for community leaders concerned with an interracial problem. It was under the direction of Kurt Lewin, whose field theory of human behavior had led him to an action research approach wherein the scientific study of social-psychological problems would be conducted as the problems were being solved. Participants and researchers (Lewin's colleagues were Leland

Bradford, Kenneth Benne and Ronald Lippitt and a group of his graduate students) found that the study of the small group experience had an imposing impact upon their human relations skills. The powerful potential of action research in the small group as an educational tool was focussed with a workshop planned for the following summer 1947 at Bethel, Maine. Kurt Lewin died in early 1947 before that first NTL workshop took place. "Lewin along with his collaborators and students, comprised an academic and community task force that, on the one hand eventuated in small group sociology as an academic discipline and on the other hand spawned the laboratory movement as a community enterprise."[8] Thus the history of the T-Group method is to be found in the history of the National Training Laboratories, now known as NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science.

In 1949, clinicians from psychology and psychiatry had been invited to join the social psychologists, sociologists and educators in the development of the group learning experience at Bethel, and the focus upon the interpersonal events occuring between trainers and members and members and events in the developing life of the group was introduced. Benne observes that "the language of interpretation used in clarifying events became more psychoanalytic and Rogerian and less sociological and Lewinian."[9] This interplay of focus upon members' interpersonal dynamics, focus on small group process and focus upon deliberate skill training for operating as change-agent in organization and community structures has thus been present in T-Group theory from the beginning. The similar themes of small group experience, group treatment, and group social action in varying balances in

our practice theory will be familiar to all group workers. Our struggle to integrate individual , group and community forces within the social work function thus seems to have been paralllelled in the history of the laboratory movement.

Bradford, Gibb, and Benne have presented a classical definition of the T-Group, giving proper significance to its educational, sociological and psychological elements: "A T-Group (or training group) is a relatively unstructured group in which individuals participate as learners. The data for learning are not outside these individuals or remote from their immediate experience within the T-Group. The data are the transactions among members, their own behavior in the group, as they struggle to create a productive and viable organization, a miniature society; and as they work to stimulate and support one another's learning within that society. Involving experiences are a necessary, but not the only condition of learning. T-Group members must establish a process of inquiry in which data about their own behaviors are collected and analyzed simultaneously with the experience which generates the behaviors. Learnings thus achieved are tested and generalized for continuing use. Each individual may learn about his own motives, feelings, and strategies in dealing with other persons. He learns also of the reactions he produces in others as he interacts with them. From the confrontations of intentions and effects, he locates barriers to full and autonomous functioning in his relations with others. Out of these he develops new images of potentiality in himself and seeks help from others in converting potentialities into actualities."[10]

From its inception regardless of the changes in its use

it has been expected that in the T-Group "here-and-now episodes and events within the developing experience of the group and its members would be analyzed to yield learnings about self, about interpersonal relations, and about the functioning and development of the group as a social system."[11]

An abiding aspect of the T-Group methodology rests in the concept of feedback. In its inception an observer was used to provide the feedback, or observational data in keeping with the "action research" objective, which was then presented to the group for discussion. Later variations included rotating schedules by which group members performed the observational role for the group. Gradually the concept has developed to mean an interpersonal skill through which members' communications are rendered spontaneous, open and authentic within the on-going life of the group.

The development of the ability to use this skill in all relationship as a weapon against alienation might be considered an inherent goal in all T-Group programs. In this concept is incorporated the skill of sharing feeling, describing feeling, listening, checking out the accuracy of communication, helping in the individual change process, and asking for help. Within this concept also is operationalized the values of respect for the individual, respect for the self, and the mutual aid of the democratic process. In the T-Group methodology the concept of feedback makes possible the communication through which a group process can emerge.

Complementary to the concept of the T-Group is that of the Laboratory. A study of these two concepts reveals that neither is complete without the other although the significance

of this duality is sometimes lost. The laboratory notion stems directly from the early roots of action research. The early goal was to bring about a higher level of democratic functioning in human organizations by training or re-educating leaders in human relations skills, in the basic social unit, the small group, and to research this process. The laboratory for this experimentation and study was a designed experience, "a cultural island", limited by time and space and structure wherein training and research for this purpose could take place.

The ultimate goal, that of "better" leadership, meant "leadership more deeply committed to and more skilled in spreading scientific and democratic methods in the group life of our industrial society."[12] These goals for the Laboratory became modified as the emphasis on personal and interpersonal growth in its own right came in to play along side of the emphasis on group growth and group membership and leadership skills. However, out of this emphasis has grown the extensive use of T-Group and laboratory method in business and management consultation and in developing organizational theory.

One classical characteristic of the laboratory method was the provision made for both theoretical and experiential learning. The design of the laboratory was evolved out of these dual modes of learning. On the one hand research for new knowledge was built into the experiential outcome and on the other hand knowledge needed by the participants was communicated both inductively and deductively by careful design. Herein was the special interest of the educators who were involved in the laboratory movement.

This stream has generated a teaching-learning theory which is being utilized increasingly in the search for solutions to the problem of the relevance of today's education at many levels.

In a less specific sense the laboratory notion continues to pervade the sensitivity training movement in that every such experience for an individual is a time - space - structure - bound opportunity to research human relations and himself and to experiment in interpersonal relationship. In this sense the term "therapy for normals" is sometimes used.

Herbert A. Shepard, in a paper prepared for the Foundations' Fund for Research in Psychiatry and published in a recent issue of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science suggests some kind of a synthesis of these pervasive elements: "During periods of cultural ferment," he writes, "when some institutions are crumbling and others becoming brittle, strategic interventions can lead to a new order....If we could define a better order, we could take stock of what we know about changing and try to apply it strategically. Personal growth laboratories give an experience of a better order. It does not last beyond the end of the laboratory because the laboratory is a temporary little world that is insulated from the everyday world. Experiments show what happens under controlled conditions, but it is a long way from the laboratory to the marketplace. Experiments are useful to test ideas, to create visions that may be realizable, and to identify necessary conditions....A personal growth laboratory is more than a vicarious experience. It is probably a necessary part of the process of building a better order as well as a partial definer

of it. A personal growth laboratory creates an interpersonal world which disconfirms much of what people have learned in the world outside, affirms the possibility of a different world outside, and provides a partial model of what it could be like."[13]

Human relations training is the earliest term used at the National Training Laboratories to describe programs in relation to the generalized purpose. This term is still used and constitutes a classical description.

Sensitivity training as a description of the purpose of the laboratory and T-Group experience is a more recent designation. It was developed on the West Coast in the late 50's and was certainly related to the humanistic and "third force" psychology movement. Wechsler, Massarik and Tannenbaum, the authors of a paper written for Issues in Human Relations Training NTL 1962 stated: "Research, experimentation, constant ferment from the merging of the thinking and experiences of numerous trainers, constructive feedback from participants - all have combined to bring about important changes in training objectives, design, and methods. Gradually, we have moved from a strong emphasis on group variables to a relatively greater attention on individual dynamics and the unfolding of a more fully functioning personality. We have shifted from a stress on the development of interpersonal skills (narrowly defined) to a greater concern with an individual's understanding of himself and of his relations with others."[14] Sensitivity training has come to be accepted by NTL as a generic term used along with the concept of human relations training to explicate the more complex goals that have developed for the T=Group and laboratory movement.[15]

More recently the term personal growth laboratory noted earlier in this paper has been used widely perhaps indicating kinship with the pervasive existential, phenomenological preoccupation with the individual. Humanistic psychologists in all major metropolitan areas and increasingly in academic centers are instrumental in the emergence of "Growth Centers" wherein growth experiences as an alternative to treatment are offered. Simultaneously, psychologists and psychiatrists are incorporating the intensive small group methodology derived from the T-Group method into their psychotherapeutic approaches. The use of "personal growth" as a goal or purpose of a given program represents a diversification inherent in the substance of this movement from its beginning.

The term encounter has a range of usage. One usage may have a less direct connection with the T-Group and laboratory method but the roots seem to be there. The encounter technique in this sense seems to have had its origins in the group confrontation and influence style of the self-help movements, such as Alcoholics Anonymous; but it was most extensively developed as a tool in the therapeutic communities for treatment of drug addiction of which Synanon was the model.

Dr. Efren Ramirez, formerly of N.Y.C.'s Addiction Services Administration, feels that his use of the encounter technique has a strong existential influence. In describing the thereapeutic environment for the treatment of drug addiction he writes: "To increase the positive requires such things as readings, discussions, seminars, a variety of occupational therapy and work and social activities. To deal with negative attitudes I de-

veloped a group technique: the encounter in which patients are confronted individually or in groups on the negative attitudes they display. It is not supportive therapy. It is designed to be specific and hitting the negative aspects of behavior, and thus the attitudes lying beneath".[16]

"The synanon", writes Dr. Daniel Casriel, "is a form of leaderless group encounter for the creation of aggressive and provocative interchange."[17]

In the popularization process the distinction between T-Group and encounter tends to get lost or merged, and should be clearly understood by social work practitioners and educators. In the encounter, confrontation is the mode of the group activity for the direct purpose of breaking through characterological defenses. In the T-Group, feedback is an interpersonal skill in which the feelings and behaviors of both parties have equal focus, and defenses are honored in an atmosphere of openness and authenticity.

The encounter takes place in a work-room wherein the group members are the tools for stripping away defensive behavior that is preventing a person from "growing up." The T-Group takes place in an experimental setting, a laboratory where one may test out and practice relating and participate in developing a social system that permits fulfillment of self and others.

In the encounter, change is produced in the individual by experiential learning and conditioning made possible by continuous group confrontation in a community, whether residential or not, designed to pervade all aspects of his living. In the T-Group,

change is produced by the individual within himself through experiential learning accompanied by knowledge about interpersonal functioning in the small group.

Encounter is a treatment technique, applicable to the treatment of character disordered persons who have reached or are reaching an abyss in their relationship to society. In general it does not incorporate intentionally small group process. Even though most often used in self-help programs where the services of professionals may be viewed skeptically, professionals in all helping disciplines should understand its goals and rationale so that in consultation and referral activity and in educational settings, we can use our professional expertise differentially.

The term intensive group experience was used by Carl Rogers in a paper in which he attempted to find "some of the common characteristics and hypotheses which...bind together this enormous cluster of activities..."[18]

He accounts for the ways in which his client-centered theories have been prominent in the development of this movement. He sees a series of brief training courses which he conducted in 1946 for counselors for the Veterans' Administration as a significant step "in providing an intensive group experience because of its impact in producing significant learning." In summarizing what is common to all these groups he writes: "In an intensive group, with much freedom and little structures, the individual will gradually feel safe enough to drop some of his defenses and facades: he will relate more directly on a feeling basis (come into a basic encounter) with other members

of the group; he will come to understand himself and his relationship to others more accurately; he will change in his personal attitudes and behaviors; and he will subsequently relate more effectively to others in his everyday life situation."[19] Thus Rogers calls the quality of relationship which is the desired outcome of such experience "a basic encounter". He chooses this label as most congenial to himself and uses it interchangeably with intensive group experience.

In his usage, Rogers has generalized the encounter concept to an intensive, important engagement with significant impact as a result of process between group members. "There are times", he says, "when the term 'feedback' is far too mild to describe the interactions which take place, when it is better said that one individual confronts another, directly 'leveling' with him. Such confrontations can be positive but frequently they are decidedly negative..."[20]

Rogers' usage of basic encounter within the life of the intensive group experience should be distinguished from the nature and purpose of the encounter technique as described earlier in this paper. It is in this spirit of Roger's usage that many programs offered today are called encounters.

A more significant consequence of Rogers' description to our purpose in exploring sensitivity training for the social work professional is his omission of the concept of laboratory. Without the notion of the laboratory as a context for the intensive group experience the distinctiveness of the T-Group method for educational and problem solving purposes from our

own developed practice theory gets lost and the boundaries get diffused. It is to be noted that Rogers is a psychologist writing for psychologists. He is in fact generalizing in the context of the treatment function of his own profession. For the social work profession with its more complex societal functions there is need for an extended understanding of the sensitivity training movement. We must understand the cross-professional origins and uses so that we can select sharply and clearly when drawing upon the movement as a practice resource and when using the technology for educational purposes. For social work full inclusion of the laboratory concept provides a framework in which techniques, both verbal and non-verbal can be borrowed, whether used in education, in the remedial function of our profession or in prevention or provision.

A laboratory program within social work education

With these definitions and distinctions in mind I will turn now to a program based upon the T-Group and laboratory method developed in the Adelphi School of Social Work as an offering of the group work sequence for the extension and enrichment of the educational experience of the entire school community.

The curriculum offerings in our school related to the sensitivity training movement have been developed within the context of social work education by the group work sequence, originally for group work majors but now for all students regardless of specialization. This is the case because, regardless of the various possible emphases, as I have tried to point out in this

paper, essentially sensitivity training is a group methodology with its origins and uses to be found in the cross-professional exploration of the small group. The concern of the group work sequence was to investigate the accelerating professional use of the small group by other helping professions and other academic disciplines, including the mushrooming active interest by the public and our own professionals in sensitivity training. In the group work courses and in the group work sequence committee we had been asking ourselves such questions as the following:

> What are the goals and focus of the various approaches to the small group?
>
> What are the central propositions in re: individual, group, and society?
>
> What is the role and function of the worker?
>
> What are practice principles derivative from this role definition?
>
> What are the applications to group work practice within the social work function?

Our concern with these questions in relation to sensitivity training went back several years and stemmed from curiosity, interest, and professional responsibility and from the increasing insistence of numbers of students who were entering social work education with T-Group experience. We were convinced that the group work sequence should prepare itself to determine what would happen in our school in this regard, and that we should provide educational leadership.

A sub-committee of group work faculty, field instructors, and students drew up a policy draft regarding sensitivity training in the spring of 1967. These beginning guide lines with current enlargement stand somewhat like this:

1. Laboratory group experience if responsibly planned would have educational relevance for a student of social work.

2. The relevance in relation to the boundaries of our educational purpose would stem from the focus upon learning about the dynamics of groups and interpersonal relating in the small group process as distinguished from the parallel focus on personal growth.

3. Any program developed, regardless of our committment to its educational validity, should be completely voluntary.

4. Any program must clearly focus upon small group process and development in order to be consistent with keystone assumptions of our social group work practice theory that in the human group is encapsulated the basic dynamic of man's social experience, both gaining and giving up , contributing and receiving the rewards of interpersonal existence. Therapeutic purpose and/or outcome are as a result of this dynamic.

5. Any program offered should be planned as an educational tool to reinforce and extend learning <u>about</u> the group and interpersonal relationship. It should not be a practice course designed to teach the skill of the sensitivity group trainer.

6. Any program should be planned to fall at a point in the year after substantial education in social group work methodology has taken place and before the pressure of the second semester is upon the student.

7. Any offering should be as a result of very substantial student involvement in the planning so that it could become in fact a joint faculty-student undertaking in curriculum development.

8. The NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science should be viewed as our primary resource because its program is academically developed and professionally controlled.

Several exploratory programs were conducted in various courses including the Program Media course. Usually these were micro-labs, arranged by the instructor, using graduates and field instructors who were experienced in the sensitivity training technology, and who were helping us to think through the application. A limited one-day T-Group was conducted in the spring of 1969 for a small group or students. It was projected that the laboratory experience would be further developed in the following year. Simultaneously, an elective course "T-Group Theory and Method" was being developed[22] and approval being sought by the Curriculum Committee. This course was entered in the curriculum last spring and will be given a second round in the current semester. Though the now established laboratory itself did not require approval by the Curriculum Committee, a plan was approved last fall by that body to enable a student to earn 1 elective credit by supplementing participation in the laboratory weekend with required reading and a paper.

Valued administrative committment to our explorations came in the form of financial assistance for the enrollment by the chairman of the group work sequence in an NTL two week summer workshop in basic human relations skills. Later administrative approval and support made possible the funding of the laboratory program that was planned.

In the fall of 1969 a group of students, three of whom

had had extensive responsibility as undergraduates in the development of such programs[21], and the chairman of the sequence were assigned the task by the group work committee of developing a plan for a laboratory weekend experience within the limits of the policy statement which had been accepted.

A major first decision of the planning group was to propose that it be a faculty-student laboratory. This was accepted by the sequence committee with a committment on the part of the faculty to participate. The laboratory which is being planned for the current year continues to follow this plan with the extension of a specified number of places for field instructors.

A second early concern of the planning group pertained to establishing the learning goals for the weekend, stated in the first brochure as "the reinforcement and extension of knowledge about group processes in relation to: 1. group development, 2. communication in groups, 3. problem-solving and 4. authority and leadership. In the brochure which the planning group prepared, special attention was given to a clear communication of the contract, i.e. the goals and model of training. In this year's planning the goals have been sharpened to be less ambitious and more focussed in relation to the kind of learning which seemed to be the outcome of the first year's experience. The goals read as follows in the current brochure:

> To help participants realize their potential for growth in interpersonal relations and to increase their ability to work in small group situations through
> 1. increased understanding of group processes and skill as a member in achieving group effectiveness. The experience of being a group member will enhance understanding of what it means to find a place in a group, reactions toward leadership, and the internal complexities of group behavior. Group experience will offer opportunity to improve problem solving skills and to develop diagnostic skills.

greatly.

There was important learning for the planning group, the participants, and the sequence from this aspect of the experience. We learned about the range of variation within the framework of sensitivity training. We also learned what are the real issues in the technology:

1. appropriate non-intervention (in contrast to social work practice theory's concern with appropriate intervention)
2. appropriate use of non-verbal interventions or exercises
3. appropriate generalizing for cognitive learning

Our three trainers, one identified with the Tavistock method of T-Group leadership, a second clearly identified with NTL, and the third with the Moreno Institute, each balanced these three issues differently in their style. The sharpened understanding of the question of trainer style should facilitate the process by which this year's training staff with its full range of individuality is oriented to the contract.

A fifth concern was the publicizing of the laboratory and enrolling of participants. The responsibility here was to make as clear as possible to the school community what were the goals and what a participant might expect. Also the principle of self-screening needed to be clearly established and a basis offered by which a person might determine whether he would choose to be involved. This year the NTL publication Standards for the Use of Laboratory Method has proved helpful in this regard. Under "Selection of Trainees" is found the following statement: "Persons in the following categories should not ordinarily participate in a laboratory training program:

> "Those whose participation is based primarily upon the wishes of another, or demands of another, i.e., and employer, rather than on any degree of personal motivation.
>
> "Those whose goal in participating would be to cure or to alleiviate a severe mental or emotional disturbance.
>
> "Those with a significant history of incapacitating response to interpersonal stress."[23]

We are making the full statement of Standards widely available in our school community this year. A sixth concern was the structuring of the week-end, the designing of a schedule for experiential and cognitive learning in relation to goals, for transition from laboratory to real life, and for follow-up evaluation and application to social work education in class and field. In the first year the scheduled formal teaching was carried by the three trainers, the general content designated by the planning group. This year the planning group itself is preparing to make these theory presentations on two subjects: The meaning of the concept "feedback" and the assessment of group process. Because of the degree of learning for the student in participation in the planning group it is being considered to propose that in future years credit be offered to members of that committee.

A seventh concern was preparation of a plan for the evaluation of the week-end as a learning experience. A simple questionaire showed positive findings in relation to our purposes. It is our expectation to handle the evaluation more systematically in the current laboratory plan. In addition to the study to be done by the planning group, permission has been given this year to a second year master's research group to request participants to be subjects in their project. Their purpose under the direction

of the research faculty is to evaluate sensitivity training as an educational tool for specific aspects of social work practice skill.

Two post-laboratory meetings were our major means of evaluation. The second session which was taped addressed the question of relevance for social work education and practice. The content of the discussion focussed upon two aspects of the experience significant to the students as social work education.

First there was learning about what it means to be a member of a group. Participants reported that the beginning process was experienced and learned in a new way: testing out and being tested by other members, feeling strange as an outsider,and in the unknown. Participants spoke of learning about the meaning of mutual aid as a member: counting on members to help each other and trusting that they could do so rather than relying on the leader. The recognition of how feelings can affect one's behavior in groups seemed sharpened experientially as was the trust of feelings and the reassurance that feelings will not destroy but will bring people closer together. As social workers the participants reported finding themselves tending to focus on vulnerability, whereas the experience as members seemed to help them to perceive strengths. Feedback in the communication process, sharing feeling, perceiving what it is that someone is sharing, checking out whether the perception is accurate rather than guessing or assuming was noted as important learning. The meaning of the process by which a group creates responsible norms, participating as a member in the developing of patterns that make for the wellbeing of all in the group increased trust that it could

be done.

A second aspect of learning noted by the participants was the impact of the worker on a group. Since all were looking at the trainer through the eyes of a group member, the impact of his interventions were perceived sharply. Thus, the concept of intervening differentially in a group process took on new significance.

There seemed little doubt to the participants that the experiential learning sharpened many concepts that have been taught theoretically.

All participants felt that there is application to social work practice, but it needs much study. The following five points were suggested in the discussion as practitioner skills derived from or sharpened by the T-Group method:

1. Sharing of own feeling by the worker without violating the professional role

2. Encouraging the sharing of feeling and teaching, modeling and facilitating the concept of feedback.

3. Creating spontaneously experiences and exercises in human relationship to facilitate the problem-solving process with individuals and with groups.

4. Helping group to focus on behavior in the here and now.

5. Trusting the confrontation aspect of group intervention wherein a person is enabled to see himself as he is affecting others.

The participants in the evaluation discussion recognized the wide spread proliferation of sensitivity training to be found in the communities in which they work. The need for standards for responsible use of the method and the ability to evaluate its use in the community seemed to the participants to be very important issues for the social work professional. The dangers

stressed by participants as a result of their experience and as indicators of need for skilled leadership were as follows:

1. Behavior may become programmed or developed according to prescription of laboratory rules thus negating the goal of authenticity in interpersonal life.

2. The group can be tyrannical and excluding as easily as supporting and including, and quite unmindful of how terribly alone one member may feel.

3. Over-intellectualization as one attempts to verbalize feeling is a possibility, in fact a pitfall.

4. The process of self-screening may break down, regardless of how carefully planned, by unintentional pressure for a person to participate in this kind of experience. The school as a community must guard against this.

5. The clarity of contract must be continuously sharpened and even then it is not always possible for people to know what they are getting into.

6. Standards have not been very widely developed and are non-existing in many community programs.

A list of dangers are not complete without noting that sensitivity training, if held out as some are wont to do as a singular solution to man's inhumanity to man, can be used as a highly reactionary focus which denies the large impersonal structural issues that must be solved at their own level. As our minority group colleagues have been telling us there are structural arrangements and substantive matters that affect interpersonal relations as much as do feelings. The predictable reactions of clients on welfare to any alterations in the public welfare system that represents cutback or inadequacy requires not sensitivity groups but an immediate, articulated, active position based upon the expertise of our profession.

Conclusion

I have wanted in writing this paper to be radical, to express my excitement with a fascinating idea that, along with its technology is coming into its own, and that our cautious profession has finally caught up with, the idea that man's humanity to man can be developed, extended, enriched, by formally working at it in self and group-created test tubes. It seems to me without question that with this technology, inherently so familiar to us, learning about professional functioning can be enriched, professional functioning itself can be extended, and the realization of the self for professional use can be enhanced.

Yet as I come to the end of this presentation I have the haunting feeling that I have been exceedingly conservative. Perhaps this is my special "hang-up" (to use the new expression in our language). Perhaps it is the persistence of change and the need to be classical when change is so pervasive. Perhaps it is my professional committment to process, the steps by which one moves from here to there. I have felt that some basic sorting out of the phenomenon is urgent and valid particularly for the social work educator. Perhaps this resumé of the sensitivity training movement and an example of its application to social work education can make the steps to be taken more clear to the end that educators and practitioners may cover the path more fleet-footedly.

I have written this paper within the framework that regardless of what theoretical stance about the profession be created or espoused the essence of social work can be found in the following words of Emanuel Tropp:

> "To be able to <u>feel with</u> and <u>be with</u> a part of the member's experience as it connects with something within the worker's own humanity - <u>this is the humanization of the worker</u>.
>
> "To be able to show reverence for the member, compounded of compassion and expectation and respect - <u>this is the humanization of the member</u>.
>
> "To be able to make the really important gift, the gift of self, the act of human love, by caring and giving - <u>this is the humanization of the helping process</u>."[24]

Alienation of man from his fellows is compounding with social complexity; our abstractions become more abstract, the connection between concept and percept a greater distance to cover, the barrier between self and others more perlexing, the need for others as great if not greater, the necessity of the humanization process the more real. If we,as specialists in the human condition, will but allow ourselves to look and experience what this fascinating young field called sensitivity training has to offer, we will find reinforcement, and extension by which to serve the human values and the social function to which we are committed and new and viable tools by which to teach the substance of our profession's practice.

Footnotes

1. Standards for the Use of Laboratory Method in NTL Institute Programs, Oct. 1969 pg. 6.

2. Gibb, J.R. "The Effects of Human Relations Training" in A.E. Bergin and S.L. Garfield, eds. Handbook of Psycho Therapy and Behavior Change, N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons 1970.

3. Rogers, Carl R. Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups N.Y.: Harper & Row, Publishers 1970.

4. Maliver, Bruce I, "Encounter Groupers Up Against the Wall" N.Y. Times Magazine January 3, 1971.

5. Hollister, William G. "Brainwashing vs. Strengthening Individuality" NTL Human Relations Training News Vol. 13, No. 4, 1969.

6. See Galper, Jeffrey "Non Verbal Communication Exercises in Groups" Social Work Vol. XV No. 2 April.1970.
and Gifford, C.G. "Sensitivity Training and Social Work" Social Work Vol. XIII No. 2 April 1968.
and Goldstein, Mel, and Hirsch, Leonard "The Use of Micro Laboratory in Training Summer Part-time Staff" Program Aids 1968-69 Vol. 30 No. 1.
The influence of the closely related existential and humanistic therapies that appear persistently in our literature should be noted.For example, see White, Colby L. "Untangling Knots in Casework with the Experiential Approach" Social Casework December 1970 Vol. 51, No. 10.

7. Our New York Times author damages his credibility when in a footnote he dismisses the T-Group as "the earlier, more verbal form of encounter, or 'sensitivity training', which has been commonly used in the corporate world." Maliver, pg. 43.

8. Gottschalk, Louis A. and Pattison, E. Mansell, "Psychiatric Perspectives on T-Groups and the Laboratory Movement: An Overview" American Journal of Psychiatry Vol. 126, No. 6, December, 1969.

9. Benne, K.D. "The History of the T-Group in the Laboratory" in T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method, Bradford, Leland P., Gibb, J.R. and Benne, K.L. N.Y. John Wiley & Sons 1964.

10. Bradford, Gibb and Benne, pg. 1.

11. Benne op. cit. p. 105.

12. "Theory and Method in Laboratory Training" by members of the National Training Laboratory 1954 reprinted in Issues in Human Relations Training NTL 1962.

13. Shepard, Herbert A. "Personal Growth Laboratories: Toward an Alternative Culture" Journal of Applied Behavioral Science Vol. 6 No. 3, 1970.

Footnotes (cont')

14. Wechsler, I.R. ,Massarik, F. ,and Tannenbaum,.R. "The Self in Process: A Sensitivity Training Emphasis" in Wechsler, I.R. ed. Issues in Human Relations Training Vol. 5 NTL Selected Readings Series Washington D.C.: NTL and NEA. 1962.

15. Seashore, Charles, "What is Sensitivity Training?" in NTL News and Reports Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1968.

16. Quoted in Bennett, Meriden "The Concept: An Answer to Addiction? New York's attempt to treat drug addiction through existential encounter" The Washington Monthly May 1967.

17. Casriel, Daniel , So Fair a House: The Story of Synanon Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, Inc. 1963, p. 78.

18. Rogers, Carl , "The Process of the Basic Encounter Group in James F.T. Bugental, ed. The Challenges of Humanistic Psychology New York, McGraw-Hill 1967 , p. 262.

19. Rogers , p. 262.

20. Rogers, p. 269.

21. The City College of New York House Plan programs under the direction of Dr. Jerome Gold.

22. Mel Goldstein, MSW, Instructor. Mr. Goldstein,Program Director of Samuel Field YM-YWHA and Field Instructor and Chairman of North Queens Teaching Center, has shared in the development of our programs as a member of the original policy committee and as a continuing resource for consultation and encouragement.

23. Standards NTL p.9

24. Tropp, Emanuel, "A Humanistic View of Social Group Work: Worker and Member on a Common Human Level" in A Humanistic Foundation for Group Work Practice N.Y.: Selected Academic Readings 1969. p. 21E